

St. Jerome Catholic Church

Largo, Florida



Christmas Traditions

2022

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Nativity by Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre. Public Domain.

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When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

Lk 2:15



Christmas Message from Fr. Tom

Dear Friends:

Let us join and thank our Almighty Father for sending us His Son Jesus to be born on Christmas Day. We recognize that as filled with joy as Mary and Joseph were at the birth of Jesus, circumstances would soon force them to flee into Egypt. The vows of marriage that a couple exchange call for them to be true to each other in "good times and bad, in sickness and in health," can easily be applied to the life of every disciple of Jesus. We are called to fidelity no matter what. I pray that the greatest moment in human history - God becoming man and being born in Bethlehem will convince us both to see our lives differently and inspire us to strive with all our hearts to live with the birth of Jesus Christ always in mind. Merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Morgan, Fr. Robert Cadrecha, Msgr. Brendan Muldoon, Pastor Emeritus, and Fr. Joseph Waters, Fr. Anthony Nyong, Deacon Fred Kunder, Sr. Lucia Bray, and the Parish and ECC staff

Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve: Saturday, December 24

- 4:00 PM Christmas Vigil Mass Church Children's Nativity
- 4:00 PM Christmas Vigil Mass Parish Center
- 6:00 PM Christmas Vigil Mass Church

Christmas Day: Sunday, December 25

- 12 Midnight Christmas Mass Church
- 7:30 AM Christmas Mass Church
- 9:00 AM Christmas Mass Church
- 10:45 AM Christmas Mass Church
- 12:30 PM Christmas Mass Church

Christmas Prayer



Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires, [here you may mention your specific request] through the merits of Our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother. Amen

Mass Schedule for Solemnity of Mary

Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God - Holy Day of Obligation

Vigil Masses Friday, December 31, 2021

4:00 pm Vigil Mass

Sunday, January 1, 2022

Regular Weekend Schedule
7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 10:45 AM, 12:30 PM, 5:00 PM



QUESTION AND MISSION FOR THE WEEK

Q: How can I bring the light of Christ to the world?

M: Pray for pregnant women and expectant fathers. Lend a hand to parents raising their children under difficult circumstances. Be a source of comfort for your own children, and give consolation to the world's children through your charity.

ILLUMINATIO



Celebrating the Octave of Christmas

Introduction and Purpose: To give Jesus gifts of service on Christmas and for the seven days following, in gratitude and acknowledgement that he is the light of the world which we are called to share with others.

Illuminatio defined: "the act of illuminating; a lighting up; enlightening; glory"

Items needed: Candelabra with 9 candles (candelabra can be homemade using tissue paper for the flames) and a Bible.

Gift Ideas: The gifts of service for Jesus can be completed individually or as a family or group. If you are praying the *Illuminatio* with your family or another group, discuss any reflection questions given and develop the service/gift ideas together. Suggestions for gifts are listed below the daily reading.

Hymn: "We are the Light of the World" (refrain only)*

We are the light of the world, may our light shine before all,
that they may see the good that we do, and give glory to God.

*If praying with small children, you can sing "This Little Light of Mine" instead.

Readings: If praying the *Illuminatio* with a group or with your family, you may want to choose a different leader and reader each day.

DAY ONE—CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25TH - THE DAY OF REMEMBERING

Candle Lighting: *Light the candle in the center of the candelabra.*

Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.

All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.

Hymn: "We are the Light of the World" (see "Introduction")

Leader: This center candle represents the constant presence of Jesus, the light who came into the world, in our lives.

Light the candle on the far right of the candelabra.

Leader: This candle represents the light of knowledge of Jesus. Today, we reflect on the example of the shepherds who shared the light of the knowledge of Jesus' birth with others.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-18 (passage is read from the Bible)

Reflect/Discuss: What do you think about God's gift of Jesus as the light of the world?

How has Jesus been a light in your life?

Who has been a reflection of Jesus' light in your life?

Gift for Jesus: Today, share the Good News of Jesus' birth with somebody. Here are some ideas (choose one): Call a friend or relative you have not talked to in a while and wish him/her a Merry Christmas. Take a birthday cake for Jesus to a nursing home or to a homebound/elderly neighbor. Celebrate Jesus' birthday by singing Happy Birthday.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY TWO - DECEMBER 26TH - THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

- Candle Lighting: Light the candle in the center of the candelabra and the two candles on the far right side of the candelabra. (3 candles should be lit)
- Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.
All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.
Leader: This candle represents the light of Jesus' love and forgiveness.
Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")
Leader: Today, we reflect on Jesus' desire that we forgive one another and that we seek forgiveness when we hurt others. Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to forgive and love and he asks us to follow his example.
- Scripture Reading: John 17:20-21 and Matthew 5:23-24 (passages are read from the Bible)
- Reflect/Discuss: When has it been difficult to forgive somebody? Has somebody ever refused to forgive you? Do you apologize when you hurt somebody, or do you just wait for the person to "get over it"? How can you be a more loving and forgiving person?
- Gift for Jesus: Today, seek to forgive or be forgiven.
Here are some ideas (choose one): If you have been hurt by somebody, even if they are not seeking forgiveness, pray now for the ability to forgive. If you have hurt somebody with your words, actions, or lack of attention, seek forgiveness from this person today. Apologize, in person, by phone, or with a letter. Allow the love of Jesus and his example of forgiveness to enter your heart.
Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.
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DAY THREE - DECEMBER 27TH - THE GIFT OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LEAST ONES

- Candle Lighting: Light the previously lit candles and an additional candle on the far right side of the candelabra. (4 candles should be lit)
- Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.
All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.
Leader: This candle represents Jesus' special love and care for the poor, the sick, and the lonely.
Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")
Leader: Today, we reflect on the call we have to reach out to those in need, those who are considered Jesus' least ones.
- Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-40 (passage is read from the Bible)
- Reflect/Discuss: Who are the "least ones" (the hungry and thirsty, the strangers, the sick, the imprisoned or lonely) in your life? How have you helped those who are in need? Describe a time when you were in need and somebody helped you.
- Gift for Jesus: Today, help to fulfill the needs of one of Jesus' "least ones."
Here are some ideas (choose one): Visit somebody who is new to your neighborhood. Volunteer at Lifeline Ministry or at our Feed the Homeless Ministry, etc. Visit a sick friend or family member; take something that will comfort him/her. Visit a homebound elderly person or somebody in a nursing home. Collect food for the monthly Lifeline food drive at Sunday Mass. Make donations to the Diocesan prison ministry.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY FOUR - DECEMBER 28TH - THE GIFT OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LEAST ONES

Candle Lighting: *Light the previously lit candles and all candles on the right side of the candelabra. (5 candles should be lit)*

Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.

All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.

Leader: This candle represents Jesus' dedication to seeking out the lost and alienated.

Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")

Leader: Today, we reflect on the call we have to reach out to those who feel alienated from the Catholic faith.

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-7, Luke 19:10, and James 5:19-20 (passages are read from the Bible)

Reflect/Discuss: Have you ever felt separated from the Church?
Do you know somebody who has been hurt by other members of the Church?
How can you reach out to this person? Do you know somebody who may be interested in knowing more about Jesus?

Gift for Jesus: Today, reach out to someone who may feel alienated from the Church. Here are some ideas (choose one): Invite somebody to go to Mass with you. This might be somebody who is Catholic but has not been to Mass in a while. Offer to listen and give comfort to someone who has been hurt or alienated by someone in the Church. Seek out somebody who may be interested in knowing more about Jesus and share your faith with them. Write a card or letter to a person who might fit any of the descriptions above.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY FIVE - DECEMBER 29TH - THE GIFT OF SHARING THE WORD AND TEACHING OF JESUS

Candle Lighting: Light the previously lit candles and the candle on the far left side of the candelabra (6 candles should be lit)

Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.

All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.

Leader: This candle represents Jesus' offer of salvation to all people.

Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")

Leader: Today, we reflect on the call we have to share the Faith we have received.

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:15, Matthew 5:19, Matthew 28:19, and 1 Timothy 4:13 (passages are read from the Bible)

Reflect/Discuss: Did you know that EVERY Christian has been given the responsibility to teach others about Jesus and to share his Word? How well are you living out this responsibility? How could you improve? If somebody knew nothing of Jesus, what could you teach this person?

Gift for Jesus: Today, share the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone. Here are some ideas (choose one): With your family, discuss the readings for this Sunday's Mass. Send a note or card to someone, and include a Scripture quote. Read and discuss paragraphs 783-786 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Talk about what it means to share in Jesus' ministry as priest, prophet and king. Invite somebody to pray with you/your family.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY SIX - DECEMBER 30TH - THE GIFT OF UNITY

- Candle Lighting: Light the previously lit candles and the two candles on the far left side of the candelabra. (7 candles should be lit)
- Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.
- All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.
- Leader: This candle represents Jesus' desire for unity among all peoples.
- Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")
- Leader: Today, we reflect on the call we have to work for unity.
- Scripture Reading: John 17:20-22 and Psalm 133: 1-3 (passages are read from the Bible)
- Reflect/Discuss: How can you tell if a family or group is united? How can you tell if they are NOT united? What can you do to be more united with members of your family? What can different religious groups, ethnic groups, or races do to be more united?

Gift for Jesus: Today, demonstrate Jesus' desire for unity among all peoples. Here are some ideas (choose one): With your family, work together to complete some goal you have been wanting to accomplish. Spend time in a fun family discussion getting to know one another better. One way to do this is to talk about favorites and wishes, hopes, and dreams. Attend a religious service other than our own with a friend. Then invite the friend to attend Mass with you. Invite a non-Catholic friend to dinner and seek to learn more about his/her faith. Point out common beliefs and practices. The goal is to grow in appreciation and knowledge of his/her faith while sharing ours.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY SEVEN - DECEMBER 31ST - THE GIFT OF PRAYER

- Candle Lighting: Light the previously lit candles and the three candles on the far left side of the candelabra.(8 candles should be lit)
- Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.
- All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.
- Leader: This candle represents Jesus' gift of teaching us to pray.
- Hymn: *"We are the Light of the World"* (see "Introduction")
- Leader: Today, we reflect on the call to pray always.
- Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:19 (passage is read from the Bible)
- Reflect/Discuss: Is prayer an important part of your life? Explain. When do you most feel the need to pray? Have you ever had an experience in your life when you knew people were praying for you? What did this mean to you? Do you think it was helpful? Have you ever prayed for others in their times of need? Do you often thank and praise God through prayer? Why or why not?



Gift for Jesus: Today, reach out to somebody who is in need of prayer. Here are some ideas (choose one): If someone asks you to pray with him/her, say a prayer on the spot. Ask someone who is hurting if you can pray for him/her. Commit to praying for this person regularly. With your family, go through the newspaper or watch the news and pray for those in need of prayer. Invite friends and family over to pray together for the needs of those gathered. Send a note or card to a friend or family member. Include a prayer you have written for that person.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

DAY EIGHT - JANUARY 1ST - THE GIFT OF RESOLVE

- Candle Lighting: Light the all the candles on the candelabra. (9 candles should be lit)
- Leader: Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God.
- All: Yes, Jesus, we believe you are really here.
- Leader: This candle represents Jesus' promise to be with us always.
- Hymn: "We are the Light of the World" (see "Introduction")
- Leader: Today, we resolve, or commit, to being a light in the world.
We remember that Jesus is always present with us to guide us and to help us.
- Scripture Reading: Matthew 28: 18-20 (passage is read from the Bible)
- Reflect/Discuss: Discuss all the ways you can individually, and/or as a family, be a light in the world.
What gift(s) during the past 8 days were the most meaningful to you? Why? What gifts can you commit to making a more regular part of your life? Today, resolve and commit! Here are some ideas (choose one): Make a family or individual plan to keep living as light(s) in the world. Write it down and post it where it can be seen regularly. Begin keeping a journal . Each day record how you were a light in the world that day. Ask others to help you during times that it is difficult to be a light in the world.
- Gift for Jesus: Choose one of the gifts you gave Jesus during these past 8 days to especially focus on in this coming year.

Candles are extinguished at the end of the discussion.

FINAL PRAYER

After each petition, blow out one candle. Extinguish the center candle last.

- Leader: Our response is, "Lord, help me to be a light in the world."
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.
- Leader: May we keep the spirit of Christmas alive in our hearts and continue to share the Good News of the Light who came into the world, we pray to the Lord.
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

***BLOW OUT THE FIRST CANDLE***

- Leader: May we always seek to forgive and to be forgiven, becoming true peacemakers in the world, we pray to the Lord.
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE SECOND CANDLE

- Leader: May we always seek to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, comfort the ill, and visit those who are lonely or imprisoned, we pray to the Lord.
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE THIRD CANDLE

- Leader: May we always seek out the lost, the hurt, and the alienated, we pray to the Lord.
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE FOURTH CANDLE

- Leader: May we always seek to live out our mission as disciples to share the Good News, we pray to the Lord.
- All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE FIFTH CANDLE

Concludes on back page...

Leader: May we always seek to recognize each and every person as a child of God and encourage unity in our homes, our communities, and among all peoples, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE SIXTH CANDLE

Leader: May we always seek to foster a spirit of prayer in our lives by praying frequently with and for others, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE SEVENTH CANDLE

Leader: May we always remember that Jesus has promised to be with us forever to guide us and help us live as lights in the world, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE EIGHTH CANDLE

Leader: Jesus told us, "the gift you have received, give as a gift." (Matthew 10:8) May we always seek to share with others the blessings and gifts we have received from Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, help me to be a light in the world.

BLOW OUT THE CENTER AND LAST CANDLE

Illuminatio



Celebrating the

Octave of

Christmas

*The fire has its flame and praises God.
The wind blows the flame and praises God.
In the voice we hear the word which praises God.
And the word, when heard, praises God.
So all of creation is a song of praise to God.
-Psalm of Praise, St. Hildegard of Bingen, Doctor*

It is our hope that *Illuminatio* will grow into a family tradition of giving back to our Lord. May each of you help to make this hope a reality of gifts to God.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Today, the twenty-fifth day of December, unknown ages from the time when God created the heavens and the earth and then formed man and woman in his own image.

Several thousand years after the flood, when God made the rainbow shine forth as a sign of the covenant.

Twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah; thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Eleven hundred years from the time of Ruth and the Judges; one thousand years from the anointing of David as king; in the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel.

In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad; the seven hundred and fifty second year from the foundation of the city of Rome.

The forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; the whole world being at peace, Jesus Christ, eternal

God and Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and nine months having passed since his conception, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary.

Today is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

AMEN